

Changes in editorial team and policies of MBEC in 2009

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Received: 7 December 2008 / Accepted: 8 December 2008 / Published online: 13 December 2008
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The last 3 years of Medical and Biological Engineering and Computing (MBEC), with its new heart and skin, have past quickly. You may recall that MBEC changed publishers half-way through 2005. From January 2006 onwards, our issues have been produced by Springer, and I may say, in a very satisfying manner [1]. Moreover, we changed from a bimonthly to a monthly publication and started using a WEB-based manuscript handling system rather than surface mail and fax. All went relatively well. Practically all of our issues are published on time, we have developed a sufficient buffer of produced papers, available via 'On Line First,' to insure rapid publication of accepted manuscripts, and citations to our papers are rising. It has been a pleasure for me to serve the journal as Editor-in-Chief over this period and I am looking forward to continuing in this position for the next 3-year period as was approved by the IFMBE's Administrative Council (AC) this past June.

I am grateful to all those who have contributed to the journal's success. In the first place, I sincerely thank our reviewers. It may seem like an unlikely priority to start with our reviewers rather than with our authors who supply the material, however, timely paper reviews form the journal's core of quality control. We requested over 1,700 review reports and received about 800, allowing us to make intelligent editorial decisions. The majority of these reports were received within 21 days of the initial request. We also received many more submissions than we can possibly publish. The rejection rate, in fact, has risen to over 70%, reflecting the increased interest of Biomedical Engineers

wanting to publish their work in MBEC. Obviously, we are grateful for all of these submissions and would like to publish more than we currently can. Toward that end, the IFMBE requested, and Springer agreed, to increase the number of pages to be published in 2009 from 1,200 to 1,300. This seems like only a small increase, but we do not wish to expand too rapidly and endanger the quality mark we have established in the biomedical engineering community.

We have some significant changes in the editorial team for the coming term. In the first place, Prof. Steve Smye has decided to step down as Deputy Editor. He played a major role in the transition that took place 3 years ago. Dr. Smye was already Deputy Editor before my term as Editor-in-Chief began and he provided substantial continuity for the journal. I am deeply indebted for his loyal and highly professional support.

Profs. Ed van Bavel and Yimin Hu also decided not to continue in their roles as Associate Editors because of changing commitments at their institutions. I thank them whole heartedly for their support of the journal. Their editorial work and advice has been very important to MBEC's recent developments.

In my first term as Editor-in-Chief, the focus was on consolidation of several new developments. Therefore short and effective lines of communication between editorial team members were important and most of the Associate Editors were selected from the Netherlands. The intention, however, from the very start was to expand the editorial team with more international members as soon as a successful work flow was established. That is now the case and I am very happy to announce the appointments of 3 new Associate Editors for MBEC: Prof. Dario Farina from Aalborg University, Denmark, Prof. Andrew McCulloch from the University of California San Diego,

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USA and Prof. Andreas Wahle from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, USA. These persons all have excellent scientific standings in the biomedical engineering community and have experience with editorial work. We anticipate additional appointments in the coming months.

The IFMBE committee overseeing the journal is the Federal Journal Committee, FJC. The FJC, at the request of IFMBE's AC, is currently chaired by IFMBE's Vice-President—Professor Herbert Voigt, of Boston University. Although the Editor in Chief, with his team, carries the editorial responsibility independently, the role of the FJC is crucial in establishing a healthy climate for cooperation between all involved in the journal within the IFMBE. Moreover, the FJC develops policies to safeguard and improve the journal's standards. For the editors, it is important that the FJC considers the standards of the journal of primary importance and forms a forum where editorial policies can be openly discussed and established. As Editor in Chief, I am very happy with the support the journal receives from our FJC and I look forward to a continuation of this high level of support we have enjoyed during the last 2 years. Professor Voigt has already announced that he will not serve in this capacity during his IFMBE Presidency, and so the FJC is actively discussing a successor for the FJC Chair.

Updated instructions to authors will be available on the IFMBE and MBEC WEB when the first issue of 2009 appears. These instructions will be more specific than those of the last few years and we hope that these are critically followed when a manuscript is created and submitted. Each paper that we receive violating these instructions, either in

“letter” or “spirit”, forms an unnecessary burden for editors and reviewers. A major problem is formed when manuscripts and the number of figures and tables are excessively lengthy. In order to help us to curtail the length of papers, MBEC has revised its page charge policies for ‘over-length papers’. The IFMBE has stopped asking for voluntary page charges in order to avoid any restraint that such a request may induce on the submission of papers, especially from those laboratories with limited budgets.

The policy of the editors remains to improve further the standing of the journal in our community of Biomedical and Biological Engineers. There are several aspects of such a policy that I hope to discuss in an editorial to appear in the near future. The main factor, however, remains the quality of our submissions and, therefore, is in our authors' hands. Hence, last, but not least, I thank all of you who have entrusted MBEC with the fruits of your excellent scientific results.

Jos A. E. Spaan
Editor-in-Chief, MBEC

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Reference

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